UNITED
NATIONS

CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

Distr.
GENERAL

CRC/C/SR.655
5 October 2000

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 655th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 27 September 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. OUEDRAOGO

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Second periodic report of Colombia

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GE.00-44661 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Second periodic report of Colombia [CRC/C/70/Add.5; CRC/C/Q/COL/2; written replies of the Government of Colombia to the questions raised in the list of issues (document distributed in the meeting room, in Spanish without a symbol and in English as CRC/C/1(Future)12)]

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Reyes Rodriguez, Mr. Urrutia and Mr. Sandoval Bernal (Colombia) took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. REYES RODRIGUEZ (Colombia) said that his country was an integral part of the international system for the promotion and protection of children's rights. It had played an active role in the negotiations that culminated in the adoption of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, had signed both Protocols, and was commencing the ratification process. Colombia also took part in the inter-American child rights protection system, and had actively participated in negotiations concerning the relevant instruments.

3. The Colombian Constitution stipulated that the rights of children took precedence over the rights of all others, a principle reflected in the Juvenile Code, which required that the best interests of the child should supersede any other consideration. National legislation was bolstered by an institutional structure designed to provide general protection for children, with particular attention to poor, mistreated and abandoned children.

4. Since its inception, the Colombian democracy, one of the oldest on the South American continent, had held a clear vision of its commitment to promote education for children and to safeguard their interests. The Government had continually striven to expand the availability to children of education and health services, and had achieved significant reductions in child illiteracy, morbidity and mortality rates.

5. The armed conflict ravaging Colombia nevertheless affected its children, many of whom had been targets of armed bands of outlaws, in contravention of international humanitarian law. In that regard, his Government urged the international community to require those armed groups to leave children out of the conflict.

6. Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia) said that modern global society was an adult society, designed for adults and dominated by adults. Colombia had a history of democracy, institutions, and conflict, all of which had been created by adults. And yet, in the conflict currently facing Colombian society, children were suffering the most. The State which signed the Convention was obliged to defend and uphold the rights of children in their relations with an adult society that had turned its back on them. That was the view of President Pastrana's Government, whose commitment to peace, dialogue, and compromise was above all a commitment to children.

7. More than a million and a half children lived in community homes and more than 3 million breakfasts and lunches were served daily to the most disadvantaged girls and boys. Protection programmes had been expanded and improved for children whose rights had

been violated and educational programmes had been broadened and enhanced. Traditional indicators showed concrete advances in health and education. However, there were 700,000 displaced children and nearly 6,000 child soldiers, and more than 100 children had been kidnapped in 2000 alone by armed bands of outlaws. Massacres and kidnappings were greeted with protest, and then silence. All of Colombian society had fallen victim to the ravages of the armed conflict, which naturally affected the 40 per cent of the population that were children.

8. Under the circumstances, the Colombian Government had been obliged to review its children's policy, and had resolved to build a new national policy for children and families which would involve the society and the family as the State's partners in the protection of children, with the State itself acting as guarantor of their rights.

9. To that end, it had taken a number of fundamental measures. First, it had devoted a full chapter to childhood and the family in the national peace and development plan, reorganized the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, restructured the National Family Welfare System and established liaisons with NGOs working in the area of children, in particular the UNICEF-sponsored self-evaluation and quality standards protection programme. A coordinating council, made up of community mothers, had been established to oversee the community welfare homes; another had been created to ensure that adoption services fully complied with the provisions of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993, and to facilitate adoption from a child rights point of view, with emphasis on the right of a child to have a home rather than the right of parents to have children. With a view to redressing the problem of intra-family violence, the Government had launched the National Haz Paz Plan, within the context of its reform of the National Family Welfare System. It had also established municipal social policy councils, each of which had a children's committee, in more than 200 municipalities, which sought to engage the participation of members of society and NGOs in designing programmes to redress the most urgent problems affecting children.

10. The Government had prepared for submission to the legislature a plan for a radical reform of the entire juvenile criminal system, from a protection point of view. It had designed and implemented an integral policy to respond to the impact of the armed conflict on children (which included the signing of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict), and had supported the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (in particular with respect to the prosecution of the violators of children's rights). It had also halted the recruitment of children under 18 years of age into the armed forces; developed a programme to provide specialized care for children displaced or otherwise victimized or by the conflict; exhorted armed groups to cease recruiting children under 18 years of age; and urged the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) jointly to create programmes for the demobilization and social reintegration of child soldiers.

11. Mr. DOEK said that the Committee welcomed the timely submission of the report, and of the written replies, which had arrived soon enough to be translated. Those two documents were rich in information, and contained figures, tables and annexes detailing progress made in the area of children's rights, health and education. The written replies stated that new and significant progress had been made since the submission of the report. Indeed, the National Haz Paz Plan

had been established; the Colombian Family Welfare Institute had devoted attention to assisting street children and displaced children, and to eliminating child labour; and the recruitment of child soldiers had been banned. And yet, the social analysis contained in the report was largely based on figures dating from the first half of the 1990s, raising the question whether progress in health, education and child protection had in fact been made. He wondered what were the results of the many new plans made in the previous five years, and whether, in fact, the State party had managed to create a comprehensive and coherent national plan.

12. The El Tiempo de los Niños plan had been launched in 1995. According to the report, it had been designed to help children in a state of poverty or in especially difficult circumstances, with a view to improving their quality of life and to guaranteeing their rights to survival, protection, development and participation, and had resulted in the creation of a Children's Covenant. According to the written replies, that Covenant had set up social policy councils to coordinate programmes for children at various governmental levels. It would be useful to know whether the El Tiempo plan and the new Haz Paz plan had been coordinated, what were the functions of the councils and how many children had in fact benefited from their programmes.

13. Unfortunately, Colombia was not a typical State party. The written replies indicated that the economic crisis had worsened and that the poor were the hardest hit, causing an increase in the number of family members who worked and in the number of school dropouts, and a deterioration in health. According to various sources, the poorest 40 per cent of the population received only 10 per cent of the national income, while the richest 20 per cent received 60 per cent. Unemployment stood at 20 per cent, and the underemployment rate was 22 per cent. There were nearly 17 million children in Colombia, 39 per cent of whom lived in poverty, and almost 18 per cent in absolute poverty. There were 2.5 million child workers, 800,000 of whom were between the ages of 6 and 11. In addition, 2.5 million children of elementary school age did not take part in the educational system, and only three fifths of all children who enrolled in elementary school finished. Owing to the economic crisis, the budget for education had been decreased by 14 per cent. Twenty per cent of all children had no access to basic health services. In the previous three years, infant mortality had increased from 26 to 30 per 1,000. It was indeed the case that the social and economic circumstances in Colombia endangered the survival and development of children.

14. He requested the Government of Columbia to discuss its approach to those problems, in particular to indicate whether it had a comprehensive, coherent and consistent plan for achieving long-term and durable solutions, and whether that approach took into consideration programme coordination and mechanisms for monitoring its progress.

15. Even more disconcerting was the situation as described by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children, Mr. Olara Otunnu, who had referred to a "culture of violence" producing a widespread sense of fear, impunity and resignation in Colombian society. Between 1995 and 1998, some 835,000 people had been displaced, including more than 500,000 children. Every year some 2 million children were reportedly mistreated, including 850,000 who were severely abused. There were 25,000 children who were sexually exploited and 30,000 who lived in the street; some 2,500 were killed annually. Children were victims of socio-political violence, torture and "social cleansing". The

impunity of the perpetrators of such acts was a subject of serious concern. He would welcome comments from the delegation on the culture of violence, and especially on possibilities for the Government to combat it in a comprehensive and effective manner.

16. Colombia had reportedly ratified the International Labour Organization Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). Had the minimum age for employment been raised from 12 to 15? The director of the department responsible for vital statistics had said that some 5 million children under 18 lacked certificates of vital statistics and were therefore not considered as legal entities. Did that mean that their births had not been registered? While it was commendable that the Government had taken measures to improve the birth registration system, it would be of interest to hear whether children lacking such certificates were in effect deprived of services, entitlements and other rights.

17. Mr. FULCI said that he disagreed with the statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children that Colombian society had resigned itself to a culture of violence. There was much proof to the contrary, including the presence at the current meeting of representatives of numerous Colombian NGOs which were struggling to ensure a more just society. He recalled a very touching intervention by a young Colombian girl during the ceremony held at a meeting of the Economic and Social Council to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, which had been unforgettable because of the pride and courage with which it had been delivered. Colombia had played a significant role in the negotiation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention. While it faced many problems, there were many in the country who had a strong desire to set things right.

18. The Special Representative on the impact of armed conflict on children had reported having met, during a recent visit to the country, a representative of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), who had pledged to ensure that no children under the age of 15 were recruited by that group. Had that promise been kept? The establishment of an Ombudsman's Office was commendable. Could the delegation provide any further information on its activities?

19. Had Colombian NGOs taken part in the drafting of the second periodic report? Had their views been taken into consideration? In the Committee's concluding observations on Colombia's initial report, it had expressed concern at the minimum age of employment, then 12. Had the Government taken any steps to raise the minimum age of employment? During its consideration of the initial report the Committee had expressed dissatisfaction with the use of the term "minor" instead of "child" in Colombian legislation. Had the legislation been amended accordingly?

20. Ms. EL GUINDI asked what sort of relations existed between the main Government body for the implementation of the Convention, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) and the various Government ministries responsible for activities related to the rights of the child. Was there a system for the monitoring of implementation? How did the Institute liaise with civil society?

21. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said that she fully supported Mr. Doek's analysis of the situation in Colombia. There was apparently no comprehensive legislation addressing the rights

of the child, and the political will to implement a coherent Government policy was lacking. The laws that existed often predated the Convention, and therefore did not reflect the Convention's principles and provisions.

22. The Ombudsman's Office had reportedly carried out studies and issued a number of reports. She would welcome further information on the role of that Office, such as examples of how its proposals had led to concrete, practical steps. Noting that there had been a decentralization of taxation powers and of social services, she inquired about the Government's possibilities for influencing the policies of the municipalities. Regional disparities in wealth were sometimes quite large. Were there any provisions for the equalization of resources? Had the Government considered adopting macroeconomic policies with a view to sustaining health, education and welfare policies and monitoring their progress?

23. Mr. RABAH underscored the need to make use of a large number of instruments and mechanisms in order to overcome the culture of violence and consolidate a culture of peace. It was therefore very important to make the principles of the Convention known to the children of Colombia. What role was played by NGOs in ensuring the rights of the child? Had they been involved in the drafting of the periodic report? The Government had allocated a substantial amount of resources to the military. To what extent had it provided support for children's activities, especially in the municipalities? Had it established a mechanism to make the Convention known among minority groups and children in rural areas? Various sources had reported that there were between 6 and 12 murders of children every day. Were Colombian children aware of their rights, especially the right to life?

24. Ms. RILANTONO said that although much had been done by the Government, the situation of children was worsening with every passing day. There was apparently a gap between the law and the reality of children's lives. If the ICBF were able to function properly, it would play a strategic role in promoting the rights of the child, especially as it was headed by the country's First Lady. While Colombia had a history of democracy, the gravity of the current situation raised the question whether other factors existed in society, such as a tradition of excessive obedience. Perhaps a thorough reform of the system of governance was required. The report referred to efforts to systematize the collection of data on children. She would appreciate examples of those efforts.

25. Ms. MOKHUANE asked whether the draft law on impunity would cover the perpetrators of police actions undertaken as part of the "social cleansing" policies of the past. Would the new Government continue the policies and programmes of its predecessor, many of which had been commendable, in addressing the rights of the child? How much of the State budget had been allocated to covering the needs of children, especially those of the most vulnerable groups?

26. Ms. KARP said that the new Government had reportedly accorded less importance to children's rights in its development plan than had its predecessor in the Children's Covenant. What specifically were the differences between the two policies? The defence budget had increased substantially. Had any resources been allocated to the demobilization of child soldiers from the paramilitary and guerrilla forces? How much support was provided to NGOs which engaged in such activities? According to the written replies to the list of issues, some 61 per cent

of the budget for children's services was allocated to welfare homes, and 12.4 per cent was earmarked for minors in irregular situations, meaning those deprived of families. Did the Government have a policy to prevent the disintegration of families?

27. To what extent was the budget for children's services oriented towards providing health and education services for vulnerable groups? Had anything been done to follow up the recommendations issued by the Attorney-General and the Ombudsman concerning children's rights? The main body dealing with children's issues, which pre-dated the Convention's adoption, focused on meeting the needs of children in irregular situations, and not on the implementation of the rights of the child and the Convention's principles in general. How were the Convention's principles integrated into the strategies of that body?

28. Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia) said that the worsening of the economic situation in Colombia stemmed not only from the political situation in the country, but also from the deterioration of the world economic situation, as a result of which the poorest countries were becoming increasingly poor while the wealthiest countries became richer. The number of children in the poor countries was rising, while it was declining in the wealthier States. In the world as a whole, most children were poor. It was for the international community to accept that reality, which called for a fresh look at development, globalization and economic recovery from the standpoint of children's rights. Economic recovery in countries such as Colombia required a basic commitment by the wealthier States to adopt development models which ensured that modernization took place in a humane manner. Economic modernization must not be equated with a concentration of wealth through globalization. It must not mean depriving the poorest countries of agricultural subsidies. The welfare of many children depended to a very large extent on international market access for the products of such countries.

29. While Colombia did have a culture of violence, it also had a culture of peace and coexistence. The international community must face the fact that the worsening of the violence in Colombia had roots outside of the country. The increase in the consumption of drugs in wealthy countries generated income for many of the armed groups in Colombia. The drug trade fuelled the armed conflict, as did the trade in light weapons manufactured in the wealthy countries. The culture of peace which the international community was calling for in Colombia must be a part of a new culture of peace in the international community as a whole.

30. Of course, it was for the Government to improve conditions for the country's development and reduce poverty and exclusion in society. It was trying to put its house in order and to address the needs of the most disadvantaged members of society. Economic recovery in Colombia would require a major effort of tax reform. If the reform was not carried out together with measures to mitigate its adverse effects, vulnerable population sectors might find themselves in extremely dire straits. Economic restructuring and tax reform were vital to the construction of a viable society.

31. Although fiscal reform had necessitated a drop in public expenditure in many areas, in recent years social spending on children's health, education and welfare had increased in absolute terms. The Colombian Government relied on several welfare-based actions to mitigate the effects of the crisis on social services. One was the conditional subsidies programme, which provided for monthly payments to the neediest families, through the National Family Welfare

System. The programme had been assigned a budget of US$ 450 million over a three-year period. Such assistance was part of an agreement between the families and the Government, whereby the former undertook to keep their children in the school system and ensure that they made use of the basic health-care plan carried out at health centres. The families must also attend training courses on children's rights, especially those relating to child abuse in the home. The programme was to be launched in four municipalities in October and would be extended to the 400 poorest municipalities by July 2001.

32. A major component of the food and nutrition programmes was food security, for which the authorities had already allocated adequate resources. Under a cofinancing agreement with the municipalities, it provided total coverage for 6 million schoolchildren suffering from food deficiency, which was one of the reasons which caused them to drop out of school. The National Council for Economic and Social Policy had recently approved a comprehensive strategy for dealing with displaced persons. It had the difficult task of establishing conditions to enable displaced children to attend school, which called for the restructuring of the resource allocation system.

33. Education funding was decentralized to the municipalities, which meant that when pupils and teachers were displaced, their original municipalities usually held onto the funds. The system should be centralized once more, which could make it possible for those funds to be used to establish schools in the host areas and to enable the teachers to continue with the task they had performed before being displaced. On presentation to the appropriate welfare service of documents attesting to their displacement, children under the age of 17 were given immediate access to comprehensive education and health-care services in any municipality. Under the school food and nutrition programmes, vouchers were established for displaced children in school and community canteens, and they were helped to integrate into the host communities through normal municipal children's programmes.

34. The Children's Covenant was essentially a Government policy since civil society - including NGOs - had not been specifically involved. Both the State and society were now involved in the national child-rights policy in order to ensure continuity. The indicators developed for the preparation of the Children's Covenant, however, were still valid.

35. Thanks to the establishment of the Children's Covenant, the ICBF modernization exercise had included a special cofinancing mechanism involving the municipalities, which had increased the budget earmarked at the individual State level for implementing fundamental child programmes by 30 per cent. On the recommendation of the social policy councils, municipal resources had been earmarked for child programmes, whereas until 1998 ICBF had provided 95 per cent of such funds, erroneously considering itself to have exclusive control over child policy.

36. Turning to the culture of violence prevailing in Colombia, he said emphasis should be placed on the investigation and prosecution of human rights violators. The current Government, with support from international organizations and the Office of the Ombudsman, had carried out a sweeping reform of the legislation relating to domestic violence against children. It imposed heavier penalties on the most serious offenders, but it also provided for less recourse to the courts with peaceful settlements sought in cases of domestic violence in the hope of changing

behaviour. Excessive legislation could lead to the alienation of women and children within the household. They should be encouraged to report violations and seek help initially, but if attempts at a peaceful settlement failed they should also receive adequate support in ensuring that systematic child-rights violators were punished.

37. Colombia had not given in to the culture of violence. On the contrary, in its commitment to dialogue, consultation and negotiation, it had set up a mechanism for coordination with the Attorney-General's Office and the Office of the Ombudsman. A woman representative of the Division for the Rights of Children, Women and Senior Citizens had been appointed to liaise with ICBF on all actions for promoting a culture of non-violence and civilized treatment.

38. Colombia's second periodic report had been submitted without consultation of Congress or the NGOs. However, on the Committee's recommendation, there had been broad - although by no means methodical - consultation for the preparation of the written replies to the questions on the list of issues. The report had been presented to the seventh session of the Senate and the House in August. Mechanisms were being put in place to involve all of society in child rights protection, in order to ensure continuity.

39. The minimum age of employment had been raised from 12 to 14. While the State was fully committed to finding alternative ways of eradicating exploitation of child labour, it would be unrealistic to expect too much in the space of five years. Also, the State was focusing on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, without which the other forms could not be seriously addressed. It was simultaneously addressing exploitation of child labour, sexual exploitation and the violation of international humanitarian law, all of which were inherent in the involvement of boys and girls in armed conflict.

40. To a question by Ms. El Guindi he replied that Colombia's First Lady was president of the ICBF's governing council. However, it was not really for a First Lady to dictate human rights policy, although her involvement might increase awareness of its importance. Government human-rights promotion agencies needed to be strengthened. It was the task of society as a whole, through concerted action and policies of the ministries, mayors and other authorities, to establish community-wide strategies.

41. Obstacles had been encountered in reforming the criminal liability aspect of the Juvenile Code. It had been viewed by some as a Government-led reform aimed surreptitiously at restructuring ICBF by reducing certain powers and abolishing posts; hence the negative reaction in many quarters. The problem had been resolved with the delegation to the Ombudsman's Office of responsibility for the human rights aspects of the Code. As the Code pre-dated, and conflicted with, the Convention, it had been amended not by the Government but by Colombian society as a whole, with input from NGOs, international organizations such as UNICEF and the Office of the Ombudsman, and a coordinated text had been produced for presentation to Congress. The role of ICBF, the coordinator of the national welfare system, had been to support and discuss the process.

42. Turning to decentralization, he said that the fiscal system provided for a resource allocation mechanism that took a series of economic and social indicators into account in

assigning resources countrywide. Administration of the process had previously been a matter for the local governments which assigned resources in such a way as to ensure a proper balance, but that system did not necessarily alleviate the municipalities' and regions' social situation. Colombia was currently negotiating with Congress a far-reaching reform of the entire fiscal system. The child protection budget was not provided entirely from the national budget; 60 to 70 per cent of it derived from a parafiscal tax assigned directly by ICBF as the linchpin of the system.

43. Resources were being reallocated on the following basis: 60 per cent would be devoted to a risk map of all the municipalities, prepared by their social policy councils, highlighting the areas where social investment programmes for children were most urgently needed. Twenty per cent would be used for a cofinancing arrangement with the municipalities covering conditional subsidies, community welfare homes and school canteens, and the remaining 20 per cent was to be disbursed on an equitable basis in the poorest municipalities.

44. The process called for the development of follow-up and implementation indicators. For instance, it was pointless to say that a birth registration programme was in place with no indicators of the time taken or the number of births registered. Similarly, it had to be specified which municipalities would benefit from an expansion of the school canteen programme. Local objectives, therefore, had to include the development of specific macro-economic indicators and fiscal adjustments had to result in reorganized spending which would finance specific projects and municipalities. The Government's goal was to raise from 35 to 300, by 2002, the number of municipalities with full coverage for primary education and school canteens and to provide all of the poorest families with State subsidies to help them to cope with the economic decline. The programmes must be coordinated on a democratic basis, with the involvement of civil society, NGOs and children.

45. In answer to a question about investment, the culture of peace, NGO participation and cooperation, he cited the example of the 1999 earthquake, which had destroyed a large part of the coffee industry. The Government had resisted the temptation to finance its policies using international funds given for the purpose of rebuilding the industry, choosing instead to embark on the reconstruction process in cooperation with NGOs. As a result, most of the reconstruction was expected to be completed by the end of 2000. The lessons learned from that example would be transferred to the discussions on children's rights, especially with regard to the culture of peace.

46. There was no "social cleansing" policy in Colombia, although it could not be denied that such incidents had occurred. The State was seriously engaged in a process aimed at achieving respect for human rights, in society at large and within the armed forces, which had committed themselves to that goal. Investigations were being conducted into the involvement of State officials in acts or omissions which could be qualified as "social cleansing".

47. Concerning the size of the armed forces budget, $4 billion, he said that Colombia was not a militarized State but a country suffering from an internal conflict heavily financed by the drug trade. While the armed forces were expected to respect human rights, they also had to be forceful enough to confront the real threat of armed groups. It was important to note, however,

that $1.2 billion had also been invested in the promotion and protection of human rights, in addition to $1.5 billion earmarked by the Ministries of Health and Education for the protection of children and the family.

48. "Bienestar" would be more aptly translated as "well-being" than "welfare" in English, as the Government's aim was to implement policies that would make children and families "well". For 30 years, the kinds of investment that had been made were more inclined towards a "welfare" or assistance system, but to move from that to providing for people's "well-being", considerable changes in paradigm had to be introduced. An approach focusing on children in "irregular situations" would have to be abandoned in favour of one of "full protection" of children, and considerable resources would have to be devoted to prevention.

49. The reform of the Juvenile Code was being spearheaded by the Family Ombudsman and the reform of the act on intra-family violence had been carried out jointly by the Attorney-General's Office, Congress, the Government and NGOs. Children who had re-entered the school system after the conflict had been treated as offenders rather than victims. Acting on an NGO proposal, the Government had introduced three rehabilitation programmes involving 120 children. The programmes were based on the premise that the children were "special cases", rather than offenders, an element that had also been introduced into the Juvenile Code.

50. In reply to Mr. Doek, he said that civil and vital statistics registration were a question of culture but that conditions had to be created to allow parents to register their children. Vital statistics registration fell under the responsibility of the System for the Selection of Beneficiaries of Social Investment Projects (SISBEN). However, because a large number of children were absent from SISBEN, State health sector subsidies were channelled through the ICBF.

51. At the meeting with Mr. Otunnu, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) had pledged to discontinue recruiting under-15-year-olds. Unfortunately, the Commander-General of the FARC had not abided by his commitments and youths under 15 were still being recruited as combatants.

52. Mr. DOEK said that he had no doubt that the Government of Colombia was committed to converting a culture of violence into one of peace; as the delegation had rightly pointed out, the Government needed the assistance of the international community in undertaking that task.

53. He would like to know the sources of funds, their destination and the criteria for determining it, the beneficiaries, how the funds were channelled and by whom. Although the increase in local government involvement was a positive step, it did not discharge the State from its responsibility to establish a system which would set the right priorities and seek to prevent disparities.

54. With regard to combating violence, the focus seemed to be on investigating and prosecuting abuse within the family; he would welcome information on the investigation and prosecution of acts of "social cleansing". He would also like to know the number of

investigations conducted and sentences imposed and the number of cases in which compensation had been offered to victims' families. Concerning action to combat the drug trade, he agreed that attention should be paid both to consumers and suppliers.

55. He was not certain whether the community mothers were supported by the Government or by the community and would appreciate further information on their role. Did the delegation have specific information on displaced children? Did families receive health-care assistance and assistance in returning to their original homes, if they so desired, with the appropriate services needed to re-establish them?

56. Ms. KARP said she would like to know whether the Juvenile Code reform bill would reflect the recommendations made by the Attorney-General. She wondered whether the bill reflected the Convention's general principles of making observance of children's rights the responsibility of the public at large and not just the State. Were parents, in particular, reluctant to change the status quo and move towards a new approach to children's rights? She welcomed the efforts to introduce real reforms into the juvenile justice system and the attempts to create a balanced view of children as both offenders and persons at risk. However, the fact that juvenile judges were attached to the ICBF meant that they lacked independence; did the legislative reform include provisions for making the judiciary independent? She would like to know how responsibilities were shared between the Government and NGOs and whether NGOs were very active. Perhaps the Government was too dependent on NGOs, whereas children's issues were primarily its responsibility.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.